

## Flood Protection Corridor Program Direct Expenditure Candidate Project Summary

**Project Name:** Ojai Meadows Preserve

**Primary Proponent:** Consortium of local and State agencies led by the Ojai Unified School District and the Ojai Valley Land Conservancy

**Total Project Cost:** \$3,250,000

**Flood Protection Corridor Program Cost:** \$2,150,000

**Other Funding Partners:** Ojai Unified School District, Ojai Valley Land Conservancy, City of Ojai, and Community Donations (\$250,000 anticipated from each of these sources)

**Project Summary:** Project Proponents seek to revise drainage patterns in the project area to avoid flooding Nordhoff High School, its emergency evacuation center, and Highway 33. The surface drainage would be re-directed to improve wetland hydrology for restored wetlands in the Ojai Meadow Preserve and additional restored wetlands on an adjacent 15-acre parcel (Cuyama Meadow) planned for acquisition and habitat enhancement. The 15-acre Cuyama Meadow property would also serve as a transitory storage area, settling basin, and filtering wetland to enhance the water quality entering the Ojai Meadow Preserve. Some groundwater recharge is anticipated as a result of allowing the runoff to collect and pool in the wetland areas. And the wetlands on the Preserve property will provide additional filtration before the water is ultimately discharged into the Ventura River.

**Flood Benefits:** The grading of the Nordhoff High School site is such that storm water runoff cannot reach natural outlets resulting in standing water in the grassy areas between classrooms, the adjoining athletic fields, and in the community football stadium, rendering them unusable for up to several weeks at a time. Highway 33 passes the east side of the school property, and during heavy storms (two inches of rain in five hours) can be covered by up to 24 inches of standing water, rendering it impassable by passenger cars. Highway 33 is a main approach to Nordhoff High School, a designated emergency assembly and evacuation center for Ojai Valley. The planned project would correct these flooding problems and divert storm water into the planned wetlands areas instead of into the existing storm water collection system that conveys the storm water to the Ojai Valley Sanitary District sewage treatment facility.

**Wildlife Benefits:** The Ojai Meadows Preserve is part of a wildlife/hydrological corridor that connects the Los Padres National Forest with San Antonio Creek and the Ventura River. In addition to coyote and bobcat, birds of prey such as hawks, falcons, black shouldered kites, and three species of owls are commonly seen on the property, as well as herons and egrets. When the wetlands are restored, threatened and endangered

amphibian species can be reintroduced along with selected fish species. A study by the University of California at Santa Barbara was commissioned by the Ojai Valley Land Conservancy to provide guidance on planned wetland restoration and wildlife protection. The restored and preserved habitat areas will continue to serve as “outdoor classrooms” for organized community education programs.

**Agricultural Land Conservation Benefits:** Not applicable in this case.

**Project Linkage to State Interests:** The project would solve flooding problems for a State Highway and a designated emergency evacuation area.

**Status of Decision to Award FPCP Funds:** Project was recommended for direct expenditure funds in 2001.

**FPCP Project Evaluation Team Action:** This project was ranked third of eleven direct expenditure projects considered.